



Tony Vaccaro Retrospective; Photography as a Timeless Art

Samantha Janazzo (November 09, 2016)



The Tony Vaccaro Studio in association with the Monroe Gallery of Photography is pleased to present the first NYC retrospective of Tony Vaccaro's work. Encompassing his images from WWII through the era of mass magazine media to modern day technology, it is a true recognition of one artist's adaptability to countless forms of artistic influence and cultural change.



[The Tony Vaccaro Studio](#) [2] has collaborated with the [Monroe Gallery of Photography](#) [3] to host an opening reception on November 11, 2016 to present the first NYC retrospective of [Tony Vaccaro's](#) [4] incredible photography called [War, Peace, and Beauty](#) [5]. In an essay by [Peter Frank from the catalog](#) [5] [Tony Vaccaro: War, Peace, Beauty](#) [5]; he beautifully covers the life of the photographer and his rise through his successful career to accompany the collection of images that will remain on display until November 21.

The retrospective is a physical compilation put together as a tribute to the development of Vaccaro's emotional impact on the wide range of the photographic arts. It is a vivid embodiment of his brilliance of technique and adaptability over the 70 years of his photographic career. Each of his images entices the viewer to empathize with the subjects of the photos, providing a personal experience with each snapshot. He single-handedly created a new generation for photography and lived through the transitional epoch of multimedia and mass media production, all while simultaneously capturing images that modernize with time.

Though he was born in Pennsylvania, Vaccaro and his two sisters were shuttled back and forth between Italy and the US. Between World War II and mafia threats they could barely identify with a home until being left orphaned and raised by their uncle. Vaccaro found a sense of security exploring his father's hometown during his youth, until returning to the United States in 1939 for high school.

In 1943, Vaccaro purchased his own camera; with miraculous balance, technical skill, and a keen eye for emotion, it was as if photography was ingrained in his DNA. In that same year the US Army called upon him, and he was drafted to combat in The Second World War. This vocation did not dim his burning passion for photography; in fact, it was not a hindrance at all.

During his years overseas he shot over 8,000 photos from Normandy to Berlin. He focused on every aspect of war from the food staff in the kitchen to the 83 Infantry Division just two weeks after [D-Day](#) [6]. Truly impacting and heart wrenching images were captured, some of which are on display at the in New York City; however, many were unfortunately lost.

Among the 2,000 surviving WWII images, there were many iconic and famous photos such as [White Death](#) [7], [Hitler's Window](#) [8], and [The Last Step](#) [9] - a photo taken through the barbed wired of a concentration camp in Belgium. After the war he remained in Germany to continue photography before returning to the land of opportunity to let his career flourish in a different light.

The next chapter of his life was split between New York City and Rome, freelancing for virtually every major photo magazine. High fashion became his new career focusing point. He was on a quest for beauty, and he was determined to capture it. With that level of inspiration he created a legacy for himself and worked coast to coast with Hollywood's elite.

This transition is visible though the work of The Tony Vaccaro Studio and the Monroe Gallery of Photography. There is an abrupt change from dark, snow covered, war-torn photography to bright, luxurious fashion and sparkling celebrities. The viewer is able to grasp and transition with Vaccaro through his waves of life, getting a sense for his artistic mindset amongst the pandemonium of inspiration that he spent his life delving into.

His ability to cover such a rich range of genres and execute such vivid emotion and feelings resonates so strongly from image to image. His impression resounds on today's high-end photography, ending the era that portrayed celebrities as a part of a realm that was intangible to every day consumers. Instead, he photographs them as people in their natural embodiment, something that the world had never seen before.

Other images include [Jackson Pollock](#) [10] with a furrowed brow, [Enzo Ferrari](#) [11] with a suspended prized vehicle blurred in the background, [Frank Lloyd Wright](#) [12] with arms spread passionately in the middle of a lecture, [Peggy Guggenheim](#) [13] in a gondola down the Venetian Grand Canal, [John F. Kennedy](#) [14] standing proudly in Washington DC and so many more. His talent was photographing inner emotions: the deepest thoughts and the concerns. He was constantly seeking the exact moment where the raw truth bursts through and snapping it before it recoils.



Vaccaro created a medium of a specific artistic platform for uniformity: from celebrities and models to candid bystanders in the cobblestone streets of Italy, he photographs each genre with the same signature style. Whether it's looking through his WWII images or Sophia Loren naturally smiling while glancing over her shoulder, wearing her perfection as make up. The experience is so personal the viewer can almost hear her laughing as if he has added a sound-bit to the flawless black and white because Vaccaro has the ability to place the viewer into the center of his photography; understanding the photo as if it were a film.

His tumultuous past is what created his strength to continue photography through the carnage of the war and to bring that influence into his art. He found his passion for photography, brought it to the battlefield in the 1940s, and hasn't stopped since.

These emotions, the pain, and the art itself are present at the Monroe Gallery of Photography- the title "War, Peace, and Beauty" derives from Vaccaro's journey through photography and through the world's beauty and brutality. The retrospective itself is a chronological transition of all the imagery where each photo, regardless of the time it was taken or the scenery in the background, has a little war peace and beauty hidden deep within. Vaccaro is able to capture every essence of truth within his photography, creating a timeless art.

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